

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT PRETORIA 3756 ACTION STATE INFO DAR ES
SALAAM GABORONE LAGOS LILONGWE LONDON LUSAKA MAPUTO
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QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3756

NSC FOR AARON FROM LOW

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIA: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS OF THE INTERNAL
SETTLEMENT

1. THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SMITH AND THE INTERNAL
NATIONALISTS SIGNED ON MARCH 3 IS NOW FOUR MONTHS OLD.
INSOFAR AS ITS STATED PURPOSE WAS TO END SANCTIONS AND
THE WAR, IT HAS NOT SUCCEEDED AND ITS PROSPECTS ARE
NOT GOOD.

2. LIFE IN RHODESIA IS DOMINATED BY THE WAR. CASUALTY
FIGURES ARE GROWING BUT MANY BELIEVE THAT THEY SHOW
ONLY PART OF THE PICTURE. A NUMBER OF CONTACTS ARE
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CONVINCED THAT THE ACTUAL CASUALTIES ARE HIGHER THAN
REPORTED AND THAT THE NUMBER OF WOUNDED WHICH IS NOT
REPORTED, IS QUITE HIGH. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ONE OR
TWO CIVILIAN MASSACRES OF THE GUTU-MASHONGANYIKA
KIND HAVE OCCURRED BUT BEEN HUSHED UP. THE
SPECTACULAR KILLINGS ON BOTH SIDES ARE GROWING IN
FREQUENCY AND SIZE AND A RETALIATION ASPECT MAY BE
ENTERING. THE "MASSACRES" APPEAR TO BE THE WORK OF
INSUFFICIENTLY CONTROLLED ELEMENTS ON BOTH SIDES. "ROGUE" BANDS
OF GUERRILLAS OPERATE IN BOTH THE EAST AND WEST WHERE WE

UNDERSTAND BANDITRY, EXTORTION AND CATTLE RUSTLING ARE NOT INFREQUENT. A NUMBER OF RESPONSIBLE OBSERVERS EXPRESS UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE PERPETRATORS OF THE VUMBA MASSACRE IN WHICH THIRTEEN MISSIONARIES WERE MURDERED IN A PURPOSELY HORRIFYING MANNER.

3. NORMAL ACTIVITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE AFFECTED. THERE ARE NOW NO SECONDARY SCHOOLS FUNCTIONING IN THE WEST (MATABELELAND) AND RELATIVELY FEW IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY EXCEPT FOR THE MAJOR CITIES. I RECEIVED AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT SOME 60,000 WHITES HAVE DECLARED TO THE CENTRAL BANK THEIR INTENTION TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AFTER THE 31ST OF DECEMBER--A NECESSARY STEP TO REQUESTING THE LIMITED FOREIGN EXCHANGE ALLOWED THOSE LEAVING. LIFE AMONG BOTH WHITES AND BLACKS OUTSIDE THE CITIES IS DIFFICULT. IN SOME AREAS THERE HAS BEEN A DECREASE IN VIOLENCE, PARTICULARLY WHEN WHITE FARMERS HAVE MADE CONTACT WITH GUERRILLAS. BUT THERE IS AN EMBATTLED QUALITY TO MOST LIFE AFTER DARK OUTSIDE THE MAJOR CITIES.

4. WHAT POPULAR POLITICAL FORCES ARE AT PLAY IS CONFIDENTIAL

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DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE. IT APPEARS THAT TRIBALISM IS INCREASING AS PEOPLE FALL BACK ON THEIR CLOSEST TIES. MATEBELELAND (15-25 PCT OF THE POPULATION) IS TACITLY ABANDONED TO NKOMO WHOM NO ONE WOULD SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE THERE. MUZOREWA HAS SOLID SUPPORT AMONG MANYIKA AND KORE KORE. CHIRAU AND SITHOLE HAVE NEGLIGIBLE POPULAR SUPPORT ACCORDING TO ALL ACCOUNTS. MUGABE'S TRIBAL BASE REMAINS AMONG THE KARANGA, THE LARGEST OF TH TRIBES (22 PCT), BUT HIS STRENGTH THERE IS STILL UNCERTAIN. MUZOREWA'S INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE INCREASINGLY EVIDENT. HE HAS ABANDONED MANY OF HIS EARLIER SUPPORTERS INCLUDING SOME OF THE MORE POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED TO SURROUND HIMSELF OFTEN WITH MORE TRADITIONAL, LESS WELL-EDUCATED, TRIBALLY-BASED FRIENDS OR RELATIVES, THOUGH A FEW OF THE MORE ARTICULATE REMAIN. THERE IS UNCERTAINTY OVER HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS DEPUTY CHIKEREMA. THE ONE MOVEMENT WHICH MANY OBSERVERS NOTE IS FROM MUZOREWA TO MUGABE. SOME SEE THIS AS A SIGNIFICANT STRAW IN THE WIND.

5. THE CEASE FIRE PROGRAM OF CONTACTING GUERRILLAS TO GET THEM EITHER TO STOP FIGHTING OR THROW IN THEIR LOT WITH THE REGIME IS HAVING SOME SUCCESS. IN THE SHORT TERM, HOWEVER, THIS IS LIKELY TO LEAD TO INCREASING THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE AS THOSE WHO HAVE COME OVER TO THE REGIME TURN ON OR ARE ATTACKED

BY GUERRILLAS. ONLY LATER MIGHT SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS BEGIN TO RESPOND TO THE CEASE FIRE AND THE LEVEL OF HOSTILITY DECREASE EVEN IN THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES. AT THE MOMENT THE PROGRAM APPEARS INCAPABLE OF PRODUCING A MAJOR SHIFT IN ALLEGIANCE OF GUERRILLAS BARRING DRAMATIC POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE FUTURE. EVEN SMITH'S RESIGNATION WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, IN MY VIEW.

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6. THE REGIME HAS MOVED SURPRISINGLY SLOWLY TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CEASE-FIRE PROGRAM. IT HAS STILL DONE LITTLE ABOUT ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION. THE LAND TENURE ACT ON THE BOOKS CONTINUES TO BAR AFRICAN PURCHASE OF HOMES IN URBAN AREAS. THERE IS A MOVE TO CHANGE THIS BUT IT IS EXTREMELY SLOW. RELEASE OF DETAINEES IS GOING SLOWLY. THE LAW AND ORDER MAINTENANCE ACT, CRITICIZED EVEN BY THE WHITE JUDICIARY REMAINS INTACT. THE UNPOPULAR PROTECTED VILLAGE PROGRAM CONTINUES. A GROUP OF VERY CONSERVATIVE AND INSENSITIVE WHITE MINISTERS AND WHITE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR THEIR LACK OF SYMPATHY WITH MOVEMENT IN THESE DIRECTIONS.

7. THERE IS SURPRISING AGREEMENT AMONG INFORMED AND THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE AS WIDELY SEPARATED AS DAVID SMITH (IAN SMITH'S DEPUTY) LEADERS OF THE (LIBERAL) NATIONAL UNIFYING FORCE (NUF), SITHOLE'S DEPUTY (ELLIOT GABELLAH), THE PRESIDENTS OF THE THREE BUSINESS COUNCILS WE HAVE SEEN (INDUSTRY, FARMERS AND TOBACCO), THE AFRICAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, AND MANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS ON THE FOLLOWING THREE CONCLUSIONS:

A) THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF A SIGNIFICANT DE-ESCALATION OF THE WAR WITHOUT WILLING PARTICIPATION FROM ONE OR BOTH OF THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.
B) IT IS UNLIKELY IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT CREDIBLE ELECTIONS IN TERMS OF ABSENCE OF FORCE AND VIOLENCE AND SIGNIFICANTLY BROAD PARTICIPATION CAN BE CARRIED OUT IN DECEMBER.

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C) IF AN UNCONVINCING ELECTION IS CARRIED OUT AND POWER TRANSFERRED TO THE VICTOR, THE WAR WILL CONTINUE AND GROW WORSE.

8. ONLY SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA AND THEIR CLOSE POLITICAL ALLIES SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE AND CONVICTION THAT THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT IS WORKING AND CAN ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE. THEY CONTEND THE CEASE FIRE IS GOING WELL AND PEACEFUL CONDITIONS FOR AN ELECTION ARE POSSIBLE. THEY RAIL AGAINST EXTERNAL PRESSURES AND DECLARE THEIR WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT TO THE END TO MAKE THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT WORK. IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO MARK THIS DOWN TO SHEER BRAVADO WHICH WILL CONTINUE UNLESS THEY ARE FORCED TO AN ACCOMMODATION BY SMITH OR AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE BECOMES AVAILABLE.

9. THREE POSSIBLE FUTURE DIRECTIONS ARE MOST OFTEN CONSIDERED. FIRST, PRESSING AHEAD WILLY-NILLY WITH THE PRESENT UNSATISFACTORY SITUATION TO ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER AND A TURNOVER OF POWER. THIS SEEMS THE LEAST LIKELY OF THE POSSIBILITIES. IAN SMITH HIMSELF HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED HIS DOUBTS ABOUT THIS TO US AND HE INDICATED PUBLICLY (TO CARL ROWAN) HIS DISSATISFACTION AND WILLINGNESS TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BETWEEN NOW AND DECEMBER THERE WILL BE SOME MAJOR CHANGES IN DIRECTIONS.

10. SECOND, SMITH MAY CONCLUDE THAT ELECTIONS, IF CARRIED OUT UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD RESULT IN AN UNACCEPTABLY HIGH LEVEL OF FORCE AND VIOLENCE AND WOULD THEREFORE SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE. AS A RESULT, HE MAY DECIDE TO PROLONG THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO DURING WHICH HE MAY BELIEVE THAT HE COULD CONFIDENTIAL

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CARRY OUT AN EFFECTIVE CEASE FIRE PROGRAM. ALTERNATIVELY, HE MIGHT BE PREVAILED UPON TO FORM A COALITION AMONG THE PRESENT INTERNAL NATIONALS AND TURN OVER POWER TO THEM ON DECEMBER 31 WITHOUT AN ELECTION. IF HE TOOK THE FORMER PATH, I BELIEVE HE WOULD LOSE ALL SUPPORT WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND SOON BE OVERTHROWN. THE LATTER PATH IS THE ONLY ONE WHICH WOULD HAVE ANY CHANCE OF OBTAINING SUPPORT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, BUT IT WOULD NOT RECEIVE WORLD SUPPORT OR END SANCTIONS OR THE WAR.

11. THIRD, THERE IS GROWING RECOGNITION AMONG ALL GROUPS WITHIN THE COUNTRY THAT THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT, THOUGH A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD WILL NOT ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE. THEREFORE, SOME WAY MUST BE FOUND TO BRING IN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT LEADERS. TO MANY OF THE WHITES AND AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF AFRICANS THIS MEANS JOSHUA NKOMO. IT IS

ALMOST CONVENTIONAL WISDOM TO HEAR COMMENTS THAT
"IT CAN'T WORK WITHOUT NKOMO. WE HAVE TO BRING HIM
BACK." THE WHITE POPULATION IS, HOWEVER, BADLY
FRIGHTENED BY THE THOUGHT OF MUGABE PLAYING A
ROLE IN THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT. ONLY THE MOST
SOPHISTICATED BELIEVE IT IS NECESSARY TO INCLUDE HIM
IF A CEASE-FIRE IS TO BE ACHIEVED AND PREFERABLE TO
BRING HIM IN NOW WHILE HIS INFLUENCE IS LIMITED
THAN TO MAKE A MARTYR OF HIM BY LEAVING HIM OUTSIDE
WITH PROBABLE, FOREIGN (CHINESE) SUPPORT. THERE IS
GROWING SUPPORT FOR AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING WHICH
AN INCREASING NUMBER SEE AS A PANACEA. PETITIONS ARE
BEING CIRCULATED AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE ASK US HOW
THEY CAN HELP. NO ONE WANTS ANOTHER GENEVA BUT
ALMOST EVERYONE (EXCEPT FOR MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE)
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BELIEVE THAT GETTING THE PARTIES TOGETHER IS A
NECESSARY FIRST STEP TO A SETTLEMENT AND IT IS
BEGINNING TO BE ACCEPTED THAT THIS WOULD MEAN A
SIGNIFICANT MODIFICATION IN THE MARCH 3 AGREEMENT.
THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE PF LEADERS WILL STILL
BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE BY THE TIME TH
INTERNAL NATIONALISTS HAVE COME AROUND TO AGREEING
TO THE IDEA.

12. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REPEAT ABOVE
TO OTHER POSTS. EDMONDSON UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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